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SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W AND INR/AA, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [IV](#)  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT KICKS OFF 2000 SESSION OF NATIONAL  
ASSEMBLY

Classified By: Pol/Econ Section Chief Silvia Eiriz for Reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d)

¶1. (SBU) President Gbagbo presided over the April 30 opening ceremony of the first session of the 2008 National Assembly, held in the political capital of Yamoussoukro. Two hundred parliamentarians attended the ceremony. National Assembly president and ruling Ivoirian Popular Front party (Front Populaire Ivoirien - FPI) stalwart Mamadou Koulibaly told the press that Gbagbo participated in the opening ceremony in order to signal to the international community and Ivoirians that the transfer of the political capital from Abidjan to Yamoussoukro had been launched.

¶2. (SBU) In a May 8 meeting, Mr. Aka Koby, the Chief of Legislative Services of the National Assembly, told Emboff that the National Assembly's calendar for this session is flexible and can be modified at any time to take into account bills and international conventions that need urgent review. To date, the National Assembly is scheduled to review reform for driving permits, a proposed law to condemn racism, xenophobia and racial and religious discrimination (an initiative of President Gbagbo), and several regional economic conventions. Koby noted, however, that the most important political and economic bills are not submitted to the National Assembly, but, instead, are submitted to President Gbagbo to be signed into law as presidential ordinances. Koby added that other important bills such as the anti-trafficking bill will be submitted to the new legislature that is expected to be elected at a date to be determined after the presidential election scheduled for November 30. Koby said that the current National Assembly is not regarded as sufficiently representative of the nation for such important national bills since it excludes major parties like the Rally of the Republicans (Rassemblement des Republicains - RDR). (NOTE: The RDR boycotted parliamentary elections in 2001 and thus are not represented in the National Assembly. END NOTE)

¶3. (C) Comment: While it is the first time a session opened in Yamoussoukro since the 2002 coup attempt, the following day, parliamentarians returned to Abidjan for "substantive" meetings and plenary sessions. The new parliament building in Yamoussoukro (Chinese funded) is under construction and will not be complete for another two to three years. While there was plenty of fanfare surrounding the opening ceremony, the National Assembly does not have the political clout needed to pass any real legislation of substance before this session ends on July 30. Coming on the heels of former President Bedie's recent pre-campaign trip to the south and center west regions to visit migrant Baoule farmers, Gbagbo's symbolic gesture of opening the Assembly in Yamoussoukro may have been an ill-disguised effort -- if not a throw away attempt -- to appeal to ethnic Baoule voters in central Cote d'Ivoire.

¶4. (U) While the National Assembly seems to operate in the mindset of business as usual, the international community does not recognize the National Assembly's validity. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1633 of October 21, 2005 noted that the mandate of the National Assembly would end by December 16, 2005. On December 16, 2005, the Constitutional Council decreed that the National Assembly would stay in office. On January 15, 2006, the International Working Group took note of the end of the National Assembly's mandate. End Comment.

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